Aknorra

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Aknorra

by EmthelRackem

Summary

Will and Hannibal had met many times before, here are a few of those times.

One shots of the many lives of Will, and the one life of Hannibal. Set before 'Mosurre'.

Notes

After what is almost a year of writers block, I have fallen in love with this world all over again and that means content apparently. I do not know when I will be updating, or what I will be writing, but these are interconnected one-shots in the world of my previous work 'Mosurre'. Highly recommend reading that one first, but not technically necessary.

In the Beginning

Hannibal had never considered himself the most bloodthirsty, and truly he never will. Of the Old Gods, blood thirst was a common staple. Truly, if one wasn't eager to feel death under their own hands they were the odd one out. Hannibal indulged in it himself, watching the sacrifices as they happened, enjoying the vengeance, the penance that appeared all over human civilisation. It was this that pleased him most, not the gifts at his alter, not the humans who were slaughtered in his name, but the small moments when one person realised they had darkness in them, and when they indulged in it.

It's no surprise then, that he himself would indulge in this darkness himself. When his sister's death coated his own hands, as she pleaded with him to save her, Hannibal was broken down into pieces. He knew that unlike the people below, whose souls were carried through their realm only to be sent back down to earth, Mischa would not be coming back once the light left her eyes. She had been one of the few who shied from the blood thirst that raged through their domain, instead offering peace to the humans who came to her. The others had decided she would pay with her own blood for this difference.

Mischa was avenged, and once Hannibal had decimated the holy temples, blood strewn up the walls in a mockery of their beloved sacrifices, Hannibal was alone. He took his only solace in the fact that Mischa was with him, consumed by him, never to part as long as he continued on.

The humans felt the godly shift, with such a large battle it was impossible for them to miss it. They threw sacrifice after sacrifice to the gods as they were slaughtered, but nothing was enough to overcome Hannibal's rage, his only increasing power as he killed and devoured his foes. Eventually, they slowed, and Hannibal became the only God left for them to serve.

It was a Sunday, as the people called it, when Hannibal's curiosity and boredom drove him to take human skin and venture downwards. He willed himself behind a tent and exited it as if he was simply another person walking the streets. He was, for all intents and purposes. Hannibal, a lowly human. He could feel their souls, see their emotions, hear the chaos of humankind. He had chosen one of his eldest civilisations, one he doted on and they adored him right back. He was glad to find they flourished while he battled, that none of his slain fellows had attacked them in order to wound Hannibal's power. They still stood strong, their crops grew in abundance, and the golden pyramid shimmered with freshly spilled blood.

He weaved his way through the crowd, passing by stalls of various colours and shapes. He considered bartering for goods as well, though he found it much more satisfying to simply watch as the humans argued over bread, or pots, or small trinkets. It's a simplicity he's never really seen before, the Gods have always had everything in their minds when making decisions. Even choosing what to eat had impacts beyond themselves that rolled out across the cosmos in ways that were tangible to living things. But here, these people could choose bread this morning, fish the next, with no consequence. Yet they argued and haggled like their lives were on the line. To his left he hears another haggle, two men's voices arguing lightly over the price of feathers. He turns, curious, and the sight freezes him in place.

One of the men wasn't…human. Hannibal could always tell, he could see the infinite possibility whenever he looked at the people he ruled over. He could feel their soul, ready for him to manipulate however he wanted. But this man, he was beyond Hannibal's reach.

Rage flooded through him immediately, the thought of another God not only surviving but being so brazen as to waltz around his town, his people. He stormed over, keeping his strides long and even, though tried to project calm. The dog at the man's feet noticed first, sticking its head up to watch. That caught the man's attention, who first looked down at his pet, and then up to meet Hannibal's eyes. There was no fear, no spark of recognition. Even when Hannibal slowed to a stop next to him, nothing the man did indicated he knew who Hannibal was.

"Good afternoon," Hannibal greets them both, if not a little tightly.

"Good afternoon," the man echoes, his eyes now locked on Hannibal's shoulder, "am I in your way?"
Hannibal knows now that the man in front of him is no God, there's no power hiding under his skin, no devil begging for blood behind his eyes, but still, he is unreachable. "No, I apologise for coming so abruptly," he offers, "have we met?"

"I don't believe so," the man says, he glances down at the dog at his feet, and the dog looks back up at him.

Hannibal nods, "well, let me introduce myself, my name is Hannibal." He holds out a hand to shake and the man takes it somewhat hesitantly.

"I'm Will," he says in return, "and this is Winston." He motions at the dog at his feet.

"Lovely to meet you both." Hannibal pauses, somewhat off balance now. "Well, I'll leave you to it." He takes a step to the side and nods his head in farewell.

"See you later," Will returns, equally as awkward. And Hannibal puts him out of mind as he walks off.

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Hannibal, surprisingly, sees him again. It had only been a few days but the lure of the mortal world and its curiosities had pulled Hannibal down from the clouds. He travelled the streets, being more of an observer than anything else, until he sees Will again, hunched in an alleyway coaxing a dog out of the darkness.

He feels him really, before he sees him. There's a pull he can't describe and he turns his head almost on instinct. Only the pressure really makes him see Will, he's hidden himself quite well in the alley, shadows dance around him to obscure his form.

Hannibal carefully makes his way over, a mirror to how Will is coaxing the dog to eat food from his hand. He doesn't want to spook either of them, too scared to miss this moment. The dog cautiously comes forward, ears down, fur matted, but Will doesn't move. There's no shift

in excitement, no aggression, he's as still and as cautious as the dog, and they watch each other with the same intensity.

Finally, the dog steps forward to take a bite, and Will gently soothes a hand down its back. The tension between them drops, and so Hannibal decides it's time to move forward.

"Good evening," he greets, keeping his voice low, his steps a tad heavier to indicate his approach. Will looks up, slightly startled, but holding it well.

"Oh, hello again," he absentmindedly scratches the dog behind its ear, "Hannibal, right?"

"Yes," Hannibal replies, "I noticed you, and your dog."

"He's not mine," Will is quick to reply, "well, yet. Just a stray, but his foot is damaged so I'll bring him in for the night."

"Do you need help to lift him?" Hannibal offers, hoping to perhaps spend more time with this strange creature.

Will blinks, "um, no, but thank you." He straightens, and the dog mournfully bumps against his leg, begging for more petting. "Usually I just lead them home, if it's too bad I'll carry them though."

"How far is your house?" Hannibal asks, trying to create any avenue to stay together just a bit longer. He's too curious to let this go now.

Will looks off to the left and points down the road, "that way, quite far, I'm in the woods."

"Mine is just around the corner," Hannibal lies smoothly, "I would be glad to have you stay over. I don't want you both travelling too far, especially if the dog can't walk without pain." Will's face scrunches, Hannibal can tell he's considering it, and so he continues, "it would be no trouble, really."

Finally, Will acquiesces, motioning for Hannibal to lead the way. He does so, conjuring a house down the street. As Hannibal opens the door the inside materialises, too quickly for Will to catch, and he leads them into a grand living room. Candles are already lit on the wall.

Will takes a few steps in and gently leads the dog onto a blanket on the floor. "I haven't noticed this house here before," Will says conversationally, "when did you move in?"

"Not too long ago," Hannibal replies, a half-truth. He goes into the kitchen, and finds meat already on the stove. It's perfectly browned, glazed with honey and nuts in order to highlight the flavour. He takes it out, portions it onto two plates, and then upon further thought adds a third plate. Vegetables already sit on the countertop, perfectly roasted, salted, and seasoned. He separates them out as well, and then balances the plates on his arm as he walks back into the living room.

"Here, I was preparing this for dinner, there's enough to share," Hannibal offers, placing the plates on the nearby table.

“Oh no I couldn’t intrude,” Will protests, but when he sees the three plates he visibly loses steam.

“You aren’t,” Hannibal assures, “I even had enough for your new stray.”

“Buster,” Will corrects, and then flushes, embarrassed, “that’s his name.”

Hannibal nods, smiling fondly already, “I have enough for Buster too then.”

They share in the meal together, Will feeding Buster bites in between his own. Hannibal loans them cloth to wrap the dog's foot, and insists they stay the night. Will protests of course, but with but a thought a guest room appears in the hallway for them to use.

Hannibal could lie, say he was only interested in Will for the curious challenge he presented. Curious about why he seemed so unreachable. But it was more than curiosity, it was interest. He was interested in this strange little man, and he wanted more.

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Over several months Hannibal and Will continue to cross paths. Chance meetings on the street turn into candlelit dinners, turn to nights of indescribable closeness under the blood-red moon. Hannibal falls in love, he barely remembers the sensation, certainly, he has never felt it quite like this. It tears through him with a strength to rival anything he’s ever felt. He fell in love with the entirety of him, but mostly his mind. That brilliant brain, intelligence to challenge him on any topic, snark that had teeth, and of course the way he seemed to be able to slip into any skin. He didn’t ask, but he could see the small ways Will changed, short words with the brusque butcher, the gentle hand movements with the performers, the small ways he became those he was with. Yet he was always entirely Will.

He walks with Will up and down the river, helps him expand his collection of strays. Will stands with him in the kitchen, the low light casting shadows over cut vegetables and cooked meat. He privately wishes that Will were a god, an immortal being that could spend the rest of eternity with him. On private nights when Will falls asleep he tries, again and again, to extend his life. A year, a month, a day. But no powers of his can touch him, he can’t reach his mind, his soul.

And then, in the cold of their fourth anniversary, Will dies. It’s a quick affair, a random act of fate. For all his power and all his strength, Hannibal couldn’t stop the tumour in his head. He hadn’t even felt it until his lover was gone, until he opened his skull and saw it there. There's no soul for Hannibal to grab and drag back down, none waiting in the clouds for him either. He retreats into his realm, too scared, too distraught to venture down. Slowly he heals, rises from the ashes sprayed around him. He collects himself, ventures down to the world he once loved, the people he knew. They are all gone, of course. The farmer’s daughter passed on and is now a babe in her mother's arms. The artist who sang for them now twelve and just discovering music for the first time.

Forty years later Hannibal sees Will for the first time. He runs.

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The third time Will is reborn, he is a leather worker. Hannibal watches his hands as they work their way around the tools, knowing that they are built instead for small lures, coaxing dogs out of darkness. Not this. He hadn't been brave enough to approach him in the last incarnation. Not brave enough to even see him. But today, he steps forward, approaching Will's stall as he painstakingly repairs a pair of gloves.

"Good morning," Hannibal greets, and Will looks up to see him. The lack of recognition almost makes him run, but he's trapped in the brilliant blue of his eyes. It's so uniquely Will that it hurts.

"'Morning," Will replies, "can I help you?"

"Yes, you can actually," he takes a breath, "my name is Hannibal." He holds his hand out in offering.

"Will," the other says, taking his hand to shake it.

And so they start again.

The Lord and his Favoured Knight

Chapter Summary

The short but special years in which a Lord and his favoured knight celebrated bloodlust.

Chapter Notes

Okay so I barely remember anything from my medieval history classes so please forgive any glaring inaccuracies. But I hope you enjoy nonetheless.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

In the thousands of years watching over the human race, Hannibal had seen many different phases, especially in buildings. While his heart will always remain in large temples built to the sky, he must admit that a castle is certainly a step above a dusty floor. Granted, there are several thousand problems with the architecture, but Hannibal is a God. If he wants his castle a certain way, that is the way it will be.

Will had died thirty-four years ago now. He usually came back around this point. Hannibal had gotten good at sensing the gap his presence caused, seeking him out if fate wasn't kind to them. Hannibal always held himself above fate and chance. Last time he was a stable hand for a neighbouring king, the time before a prince who couldn't get out of the castle fast enough. The two before that he died in infancy. Hannibal mourns those the most.

This time he's a knight. A village to the south is his main domain, from Hannibal's research he hides himself away in his house, though he's ferocious in battle. And so of course Hannibal has to hire him.

He disguises his intention behind Will's talents, simply arguing that he, as a highly favoured Lord, deserves such a knight more than the village he's guarding. The village is hesitant at first, but a large sum and the promises of another knight convince them to release their protector. Of course, this doesn't entirely work in his favour as Will is upset to be separated from the few he had friendly ties with. And they never seem to let him keep his dogs.

He is, therefore, understandably cautious when Hannibal invites him in to eat. He blinks in the low light of the candles and looks at the spread on the table. It's a long formal dining table, however only two are around it, and the long-running tablecloth of deep red is adorned with bowls and plates of extravagant taste. No matter where he was Hannibal would find an excuse to cook.

"Good evening," Hannibal greets, and Will slowly raises his eyes to meet Hannibal's own. Just for a second, and then he flits them away.

"Good evening," Will returns, not making any move to sit at the table. He stands awkwardly at the door.

"Come sit," Hannibal offers, gesturing at the seat to his right. Will does so hesitantly, and Hannibal pours him a glass of wine.

Will watches him carefully as he does so, and finally initiates conversation. “I would expect you to have servants for this.”

“I don’t keep many,” Hannibal admits, “besides, I prefer to keep my meals more intimate.” Will scoffs and Hannibal smirks in the low light, “I also heard you prefer the same.”

Will recognises the dig at his past life, as playful as it was, and looks to the side. “Yes, well, I’m not a fan of people.”

“One mustn’t be, to be in your position,” Hannibal argues, serving himself some vegetables.

“Hardly,” Will dismisses, “the knights live to be worshipped.”

“And you don’t?” He says it as a question, but they both know it’s not.

“People are too much for me,” Will admits quietly. He looks a little far away.

Hannibal smiles, “I hope to not be too much for you then.”

Will stays under his employ for two more years. Hannibal watches him on the battlefield, there are so few lives where he can truly see Will in all his glory. He looks godly drenched in the blood of his enemies. Even though it’s his duty, when their eyes meet across the field Hannibal knows that Will enjoys it. They grin at each other, both bloodstained, drenched to their soul. Later, in the evening, they celebrate their successes. Privately, a drink shared between a Lord and his favoured knight.

Slowly, as with every life, Hannibal begins his courting. Will is resistant at first, his duty preventing him, the social implications of the time making him nervous. But they had never been ones to adhere to the social standard. It starts slowly in dark corners, away from prying eyes, and slowly becomes invitations to each other’s rooms. It’s long, but Hannibal doesn’t feel any less love. Will in this life has given himself to his cause, and his cause is now Hannibal. He worships with blood, not gentle nights, and Hannibal is perfectly content. They grow around each other as they always do, relearning each other as they do every time.

The letter comes from a messenger on horseback, sweaty and shivering they hand over the message that the neighbouring Lord is formally starting a land dispute. A war, so confident he’ll win he doesn’t even give Hannibal an offer to negotiate. The servant trembles before Hannibal’s anger, and returns to his Lord with a message of his own.

“I’ll fight,” Will says, head held high even as he stands without armour in Hannibal’s room. He’d stormed in as soon as he heard the news. Not cocky, but prepared. Even in night clothes,

he looks formidable, the power sits under his skin, tightly controlled.

“I have armies,” Hannibal argues simply, casting the letter to the side. “He wants my land, you’ll not die for that.”

“I’ll fight,” Will repeats, stepping forward defiantly. “It’s not for your land, it’s for you.”

Will goes as he lived, feral and bloody. He cries out as he dies, the sword pierces his lungs and the barbs tear his chest to shreds. Hannibal feels it as hard as he does every time. He’s good at hiding it now, barely a flinch to give it away. The next morning his castle is vacated, already tumbling to the ground, ground sullied and untillable, and Lord Chilton is cursed to an eternity of suffering. He’s been cursed before but Hannibal feels sick pleasure in cementing it again.

Will is buried under the grounds, the walls that protect his bones collapse on the intruders before they have the chance to disturb him. It goes on in legend as cursed, when really all it’s been is blessed.

Hundreds of years later, famous explorer Frederick Chilton is crushed and left to die an excruciating death when he steps too close. Hannibal's smile goes unnoticed by Will, who lies asleep on his chest.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading, thank you everyone who commented, read, liked, it was great encouragement to keep going. I hope you enjoyed and have a lovely rest of your day!

The God and the Acolyte

Chapter Summary

In the famed island of Atlantis, Will is born as a simple Acolyte.

Chapter Notes

Hey y'all, quick TW for imagery very similar to a tsunami. Also, character death.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

This lifetime, Will had been born as an acolyte in an island nation. Atlantis they called it, and their connection to the gods was significantly stronger than almost anywhere else Hannibal had seen. Their towers once called to the gods for nourishment, and bountiful harvests, but now they stay ever unlit. They felt the shift in the gods' power more strongly than anyone else, and it plunged them into darkness and despair. Fear and anger sit heavy throughout the town, though they disguise it well between marvellous structures and detailed murals. It had been long enough ago that they did not know why the pillars lay unlit, but they knew a darkness had fallen over them, their blessings of legend never returned.

Will was brought up in a temple to one of the minor gods, Hannibal barely remembers conquering their domain and ripping them to shreds. There was no fight, no way this minor God could even hope to wound Hannibal, as powerful as he was.

Hannibal finds him worshipping, finishing the ceremonial bows and lighting his candle. He would feel anger at this, but the god they worship is long gone, and the actions remain meaningless.

“Can I help you?” Will asks, and Hannibal realises he has perhaps been staring too long.

“Yes,” Hannibal answers smoothly, “I am visiting from the mainland, I wanted to worship.”

“The temple for Hestas is down the road,” Will offers, “and Kilmana’s church is just past that.”

“I wanted to worship here,” Hannibal rebuts.

Will blinks, “You want to worship here, in the temple of Jisna?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Nobody worships Jisna anymore.”

“Then why do you?”

Will’s eyes track Hannibal up and down, and then he sighs, “come. I’m sure I have a spare candle around here somewhere.”

Hannibal never ends up praying, instead, he distracts Will with conversation. He learns that he was adopted at a young age to be an acolyte, that Jisna was seen as a poor god to follow and the only reason the temple hadn’t been torn down yet was because Will was here as an acolyte, as well as his mentor. Hannibal thinks he remembers him now, the god of fishing. He blessed his followers with large catches, patience, and strong hands. He was often ignored in favour of Hestas, god of bountiful harvests, and Kilmana, god of riches and treasures.

Over the next few days, he visits Will over and over again, each time distracting him from practice. They walk the town one time, but the dirty looks and thrown insults at Will stop them from venturing out much more.

“They think I’m cursed,” Will explains one night in the temple, only a candle to see by, “I can see people’s hearts, their intentions. It’s isolating.”

“I think it a gift,” Hannibal offers instead, sweeping a curl behind Will’s ears.

Will teaches him the ways of fishing, something they had shared in a past life, but Hannibal is always delighted to join Will in anything. They craft lures together, bring in nets of fish, and catches as large as their arms. Jisna does not bless them, but Hannibal does.

Then, one day, a cold night in the coldest season, Hannibal finds the temple doors closed. He knocks, and when the door does not open for him, he gently forces it himself.

There, in the centre of the hall, is Will. He’s hunched over an elder figure lying on the ground and covered in cloth. Will slowly and methodically lights candles dotting the hall, the light dancing around the room.

“Will,” Hannibal calls softly, and Will’s head darts up.

“How did you-“ he starts, then shakes his head, “it doesn’t matter, leave. This is a private matter.”

“What happened?” Hannibal asks gently, taking another step closer.

Will remains silent, and Hannibal is about to speak again when there’s a soft sniffle. “My mentor passed away. He had a heart attack as he was praying. I just found him.” Will shudders, “now it’s just me.”

“It’s just us,” Hannibal corrects softly, finally stepping forward to lay a hand on his love’s shoulder, “let me help.”

“It’s all done now,” Will says softly, “I’ve prayed over him, lit the candles. We wait until they go out.”

“I’ll wait with you,” Hannibal offers, and Will shakes his head softly but says nothing. Instead, he clutches Hannibal’s hand.

They wait in the quiet until the last candle goes out with a trail of smoke. Sunlight is just beginning to filter through the window, and Will has deep bags under his eyes.

“I have to talk to the high priests,” Will says softly, “They’ll probably tear this place down now that he’s gone.”

“What about you?” Hannibal asks and Will snorts.

“I’m the cursed acolyte, I won’t be allowed to run this place.”

“You can,” Hannibal starts, only to be cut off.

“I can’t,” Will snaps, “my best hope is to get in with one of the other priests. Though that’s a small chance. I’ll probably go to the mainland.”

“I shall come with you,” Hannibal offers and Will nods softly.

“I would like that.”

They sit in silence for a moment more, until the sounds of the street filter through the doors, and Will stands.

“You shouldn’t come with me,” he says, “you aren’t an acolyte, they’ll have my head for letting you in here for mourning. I’ll see you tomorrow?”

“Tomorrow,” Hannibal promises, and when Will leaves, he too departs for his godly realm.

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Tomorrow comes, and Hannibal finds himself wandering the streets, trying to find Will. He can’t, the temple is indeed closed, a sign out the front proclaiming it is going to be torn down and rebuilt for one of the other gods. Will isn’t by the shore, with the docks. He’s not near the hidden alleys, nor is he near the small shopping streets.

But then Hannibal finds him, in the town square. He’s been hung.

His body hangs from the gallows, obviously bruised and battered from before death, and people walk around it as though this is a common occurrence, no one stops to cry for him, no one mourns him, and Hannibal feels himself tear from the inside.

A girl comes up next to him and follows his line of sight to the body. Hannibal takes a breath to try and hide the rage and despair raging war inside him.

“What happened?” He asks softly, dangerously. The girl blinks, and her eyes meet his.

“The high priests took him out last night, they had tried him for murder,” she shrugs, and lowers her eyes, “the crowd hated him, the high priests said it was because he’s cursed.”

“He’s not,” Hannibal says, his wavering voice betraying his emotions.

“I know that,” the girl protests, “they didn’t. The high priests said he had to hang because he killed his mentor. Because he was cursed they said he would kill again.” She shifts her feet along the ground and then looks back up at Hannibal. "You were his friend," the girl says, and Hannibal is struck by how young she appears.

"I was," Hannibal confirms.

"I'm sorry," she offers, "I saved this, he dropped it as they took him. I think you should have it." She holds out her hand, and in it lays colourful feathers around a hook. Hannibal takes it, and a wave of despair passes through him. They had made this together, they were going to go fishing the next week.

"Thank you," Hannibal says, sincerely, "what's your name?"

"Abigail," she says.

"Abigail, I wish you many blessings." And then he rips her soul from her body. It's a mostly painless procedure. A mercy compared to what the rest of the island will experience.

He calmly walks to the centre, the plaza that holds their pillars alight as one and Hannibal watches as people stream out of their houses in joy, shouts fill the street as they approach, cautious but joyous at the apparent return of their Gods. They congregate in the street, men, women, children. Standing around and cheering. The island shakes with their joy, with Hannibal’s power. He lets it.

And then he pushes.

Cheers of joy turn to fear as the island starts to lower, sink into the unforgiving ocean. The roar of water gets louder, as on all sides it rushes in, already flooding houses and shops. It’s too fast for them to escape, a massive wave sweeps across the street and lifts them all up. Hannibal pushes harder and the island drops, the water with it. It rushes back to fill the gap, creating a whirlpool of suffering as they all succumb to the horror of the ocean.

As the pillars lower, and the screams fill the air, Hannibal remains above it all. He hasn’t moved, not an inch from where he was. A desperate survivor swims to him, holding on to his feet.

“Save us,” he begs, “have mercy!” His robes denote him as a high priest, desperate for any higher power.

“No,” Hannibal declares, and he wills the ocean to grab the filth off him and drag him down to the depths.

It takes hours for the island to sink completely, bodies lay floating in the middle of the chaos. There's no hope for the survivors now, no one will find them, he makes sure of that. Hannibal, the fire of revenge still simmering under his skin, simply walks away.

Chapter End Notes

Well, I hope you enjoyed. Thank you so much for all the support, kudos, comments, etc! This is the last one I had any kind of plan for, any ideas here on out will be new. If you have a suggestion, feel free to comment, but sometimes writers block will kick my ass so I'm so sorry if I find myself unable to take it into account. As always, I hope you enjoyed, and have a lovely rest of your day!

The Psychic and the Client

Chapter Summary

> One of the few times Will's empathy is used to its fullest extent, and how Hannibal pines for it.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal has to admit, the suits of the 1800s were incredibly flattering on him. He enjoyed a life of high society, wine, performances, any lavish thing he could get his hands on. It seemed, however, that Will did not enjoy the same.

Recently, Hannibal had noticed that Will just couldn't luck into the same positions, he was constantly being born into poverty, often working hard jobs, or thankless ones. Hannibal always helped him ascend when he could, even if Will simply saw him as a friendly face for most of their time together.

This reincarnation didn't seem any different, as Hannibal had struggled to find any trace of Will in high society, or even in his colleague's factories and farms, until one day a new circus act catches his eye.

The travelling circuses had become common, and Hannibal was inclined to visit, even if just to satisfy his curiosity. His favourite performances will always involve complex orchestras or impressive operas, but seeing the extent of human oddities was still a great way to spend an afternoon.

The circus for today is a mix of random oddities, several performances of acrobats, as well as standing exhibitions like a bear or an albino woman. Then, he finds a small tent to the side with a line out the door. A sign outside proudly proclaims that this is the 'Only True Psychic' in the world, who can 'read minds'. Hannibal almost passes it over but as he walks past he catches a glimpse as someone leaves the tent. Through the slit of fabric, he sees curled brown hair and striking blue eyes, and he finds himself pausing.

At best he can start again, at worst he has a fun new experience. He joins the line.

It takes several minutes for him to get to the front, each person in front of him getting a minute or two inside before they leave the tent. As he waits for his turn next, he can hear the conversation inside, and through the tent flaps, he can catch a glimpse.

It is Will, thankfully, he looks as lovely as Hannibal remembers. He's looking into the eyes of the lady across from him, a dramatic veil shielding his eyes ever so slightly, and a small collection of crystals sitting in front of him. He's describing the lady, as she sits in front of

him, telling her about her own hobbies and interests, her day-to-day life. He even dips into her relationships, describing her family to her and how she feels about each one.

Hannibal can see the lady begin to shake as Will describes her affair, and she quickly stands to leave. She pauses, though, as she does, seeming to remember the promise on the wall that Will won't tell anyone anything he discovers, and instead, her fear turns into curiosity and excitement. She asks Will a question, and Will answers in riddles that she takes at face value, and then she leaves.

Hannibal watches her go and takes a second to breathe before he enters the tent himself.

Inside, the tent is a dark red, not quite a wide colour, but dark enough that Hannibal can tell it's been used to create a fantastical atmosphere. Will sits on one side of a small table, with an open chair for Hannibal to sit in. Just to the side of the chair is a small box, and Will gestures to it as he averts his eyes, quite obviously resetting himself.

Hannibal smoothly deposits the required amount into the box and sits himself in the chair. He's been the subject of Will's empathy before, in dark-lit rooms where they sit together and play with their own boundaries, but this is not that and so Hannibal shutters his gates closed. He knows how to do it, a certain blankness behind his eyes, his posture straight but relaxed. Nothing to overload Will's brain. He is curious what Will will do when presented with such a blank slate. (And in his mind, he is hopeful that Will will find him interesting).

Will blinks behind the dark veil, but then looks up and stares into Hannibal's soul. He seems both stressed and bored in the action, as if the anxious rattling inside is an everyday occurrence. Hannibal supposes it is.

"You are longing," Will begins, and Hannibal is surprised he gathered so much so quickly, "and, not lost, but wandering."

"What do I long for," Hannibal tests softly, and Will makes a soft tut.

"You came for a mind reading, not a test," He retorts easily, "though, I have a feeling that is something you will always do. Test others. It interests you." Will tilts his head slightly, "You long for interest. Curiosity drives you. It's what you brought you in today."

Hannibal finds himself swallowing thickly, seeing Will use his gifts to their full extent was a rare sight, even when they were much more well acquainted, and it caught his breath each and every time. In all his years of wandering the earth, he had never seen someone with such a beautiful mind.

"Perhaps it was," Hannibal lets himself admit, "is that all I am? Curiosity and longing?"

"You would like to think not," Will answers, smoothly, dodging the real question with all the ease of an acrobat, "you think of yourself as elevated, there could never truly be a full explanation behind your actions," Will blinks, and Hannibal realises they have been holding eye contact this whole time, unbroken, "though perhaps you are a just a man of two simple words."

“I guarantee I am much more than a man of two words,” Hannibal replies evenly, “you can’t see the rest?”

“I could,” Will answers, “but you won’t return if I did.” A sly smirk appears on his face, “and it appears our two minutes are up, Mr. Curiosity and Longing.”

“Call me Hannibal,” He rises out of his chair, “I anticipate we will meet again.”

—

The next time they meet is when Hannibal returns back to Will’s tent. Will sees him enter and there’s a knowing look in the quick glance.

“Hannibal,” He says, gesturing to the money-box, “I’m glad to see you back.”

“You knew I would return,” Hannibal replies evenly, “set me up for it, really.” He slides into the seat opposite him, “did you enjoy it?”

“I believe this time is for you to be read, not me,” Will answers, straightening the set of crystals in front of him. “I believe I paid for this time to be whatever I wished,” Hannibal argues.

Will smiles, “ah, so I can add bossy to your word list then.”

“I would prefer a different term, but I suppose the sentiment is the same.” Hannibal glances down at the table, “you’ve been given new stones.”

“Enhances the mystique of it all,” Will says, answering the unasked questions. It also means he glances back down, taking his eyes off of Hannibal’s for the first time since he entered the room.

“Not to your taste?” Hannibal asks.

“Many things are often not tasty,” Will replies. He glances back at Hannibal, seeming to remember their surrounding circumstances, “Should I add manipulative to the list then?”

“Is attempting conversation manipulative?”

Will sighs, “we’ll leave it under curiosity then.” He locks eyes with Hannibal, “Back to your two words, I can assume bossy will fit under one of the categories.”

“Well if you expand the categories anything will fit under it,” Hannibal huffs, a little put out to be explained so simply, “I could describe you as a man of two words as well then.”

“And what would you say those two words are,” Will questions, raising one eyebrow.

“I would love to tell you,” Hannibal says, “but it does appear our two minutes are up.”

Will glances at the clock next to the money box, “it appears they are. Same time next week then?”

“Perhaps I can bring something more exciting than ‘bossy’ next time,” Hannibal offers, rising from his chair.

Will smiles at him as he leaves, and the next person enters the tent. Hannibal is glad to note that Will at least finds him interesting enough to see again.

—

Their next meeting was surprisingly in a different dimly lit room. Hannibal almost doesn’t recognise him at first, in simple slacks and an old woollen jumper, but then he turns and he catches a glimpse of those shocking blue eyes.

He slides up next to him at the bar and beckons over the bartender.

“Two whiskies on ice,” he says, and the bartender turns away to pour them.

“I wouldn’t expect you to still be paying for a reading,” Will says, casting a glance at Hannibal in his tailored suit.

Hannibal glances back, and turns his body slightly towards the other man. “I suppose that is a more reasonable explanation than paying for a friend. Or out of simple nicety.”

“Simple curiosity,” Will counters, “you are still a man of only two words.”

“Can I not be curious and nice?” Hannibal wonders aloud as he hands the spare whiskey to Will.

“You can be to others,” Will answers, taking the drink and staring at the ice swirling within, “but perhaps not to me.”

“You see yourself as so impossible to be nice to?” Hannibal asks.

“I see you as impossible to separate the two concepts,” Will murmurs into the glass, “at least to me.” He takes a swig and hums at the taste.

Hannibal follows suit, finding himself slightly appalled at the store’s liquor. “You have such a negative opinion of me?” He asks, “or of yourself?”

“I never said curiosity was a poor trait. Just that you are a simple man, beholden to simple desires.” Will swirls the glass in his hand, and absentmindedly pushes his glasses slightly higher on his nose.

“Perhaps you have too much ego, seeing yourself as so interesting.” Hannibal counters, and Will shoots him a knowing look, meeting his eyes for the first time.

“Projecting much,” he mutters, the slightest hint of humour dancing across his words.

Hannibal feels ever so slightly off-kilter, he’s not used to Will so casually sizing him up every time he looks at him, “is it so wrong to think of oneself as interesting? To want to surround oneself with interesting ideas and people?”

“You’re not that interesting to me,” Will says, taking another sip of his drink, “no one really is.”

“You see everyone too completely to be interested by them anymore,” Hannibal surmises, “your empathy has become your curse.” Will stops, frowns. He looks back to Hannibal and tips his head to the side ever so slightly. Hannibal smiles, shark-like. “You are not the only observant one. Psychics do not often refuse to see the future for their clients, neither are they often correct.”

“I’m still psychic enough,” Will defends, hairs bristling.

“Psychics employ cheap tricks, magic orbs and smoke,” Hannibal pauses, “your gift is much more impressive than some vague prophecy.”

“Well, people only pay for vague prophecies,” Will mutters, “so don’t say anything, all right?”

“If you went out of business who would I have such good conversations with?” Hannibal counters, and Will stares at him for another second before softening.

“True,” he allows, “you would have no one to be curious about.” He drinks the rest of his glass in one go and stands to go.

“Leaving so soon?” Hannibal asks, “no time to spare if I’m not paying?”

Will stops, and turns to him, “you would like me to stay?”

“I do enjoy spending time with my friends,” Hannibal says, “I won’t even cover your drink this time.”

Will smiles, just a twitch of the lips, and slides back into his seat. They end up talking well into the night, well past when the oil lamps start to fade, and eventually until the bartender has to close. Hannibal keeps to his word and doesn’t spend another penny on Will’s drinks.

—

He visits again the next week, and the week after, and the two find themselves at a regularly scheduled appointment of two minutes. Will refuses to go beyond the two words, and Hannibal refuses to stop viewing Will in turn. Sometimes Hannibal will visit twice in a week, and sometimes not at all, just as a test. Will is never surprised to see him though.

He returns again, but to a partially empty plot of land, some of the tent already cleared away and many of them devoid of workers. He finds Will’s tent in its usual corner, but Will is outside in casual clothes, taking down the tent with learned skill.

“Will,” Hannibal calls as he approaches, “you’re leaving?”

Will turns his head slightly in recognition, but doesn’t meet his eyes, “its a travelling circus,” Will says, “we’re due down south in a few days. Besides, customers here have about dried up.”

For some reason, this had never crossed Hannibal's mind in the many times they had met. "I hadn't realised you were to go so soon."

"We might be back," Will says idly, and Hannibal thinks, a little hopefully, "but it's not in the schedule yet."

"What's in the schedule, if you don't mind me asking?"

Will half shrugs, "down south, through the major cities. We've got a major donor in one rural town but aside from that we're just travelling down until we hit the border. I don't know if we have the permits to cross though."

"I could be a donor here," Hannibal offers, "if it would keep you longer."

Will finally meets his eyes, or rather, looks at his face, "I can't stay."

"You can," Hannibal challenges, "you don't even have to stay as a psychic, there are many jobs around here that need to be done."

Will finally finishes collapsing the tent, and lets it fall to the ground in a deflated heap. "I'll see you when I next come through, if you'll be waiting for me?"

"I will," Hannibal promises, with everything that he is. Will clasps a hand onto Hannibal's shoulder, and then walks away.

And Hannibal lets him.

They don't meet again in this lifetime.

Chapter End Notes

hehe...hi everyone! I'm..back? Ish? Honestly I'm busy out of my mind sometimes, but some of the writing inspiration has come back. History is not my strong suit, so there's probably many many historical inconsistencies, hopefully not enough to pull anyone out of the story!

I hope you enjoyed, it would be amazing if you leave a kudos, comment, or simply read my work. Honestly it's all very much appreciated. And as always, have a lovely rest of your day!

The Party-thrower and the Party-goer

Chapter Summary

> Hannibal is discouraged to find that society is not as accepting of their relationship, and all the flow on affects this has on both of them.

Chapter Notes

> Slight TW for period typical homophobia. References to being gay are described as 'unnatural', but there's no outright slurs.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal had taken to extravagance in this life, large dinner parties that go late into the night, a mansion with rooms upon rooms, and enough suits for a lesser man to drown in. He did not need this opulence of course, but in this life he wanted it. He had become a household name, and it was nice to be worshipped again so fully.

It was all for nothing unless he could locate Will again. It had been increasingly difficult, and Hannibal was becoming annoyed with fate.

(In the quiet moments he feared that perhaps the cycle had broken, and the thought near drove him to madness.)

Though, finally, at one of the symphonies around town, he finally catches a glimpse of curled brown eyes and glasses. His heart jumps, but he smooths it. No use for false hope. He hasn't even seen his face yet.

He walks up, as calm as he can, and introduces himself.

"Good evening," he offers his hand, the other holding his wine glass, "I don't believe I've seen you here before."

"Oh, yeah," Will answers, fumbling a little at the unexpected interaction and clumsily shaking his hand, "I don't usually come."

"No?" Hannibal asks, shaking his hand once, "And yet you have come on a wonderful night. Did you enjoy it?"

"Yeah, it was good," Will offers, shrugging a shoulder, "you come often then?"

Hannibal smiles, “Yes, I quite enjoy the atmosphere.” He takes a sip of his wine, “My name is Hannibal.”

“Will,” he takes a sip of his own glass, a subconscious mirroring, “um, yeah it's good.”

“What brought you tonight then?” Hannibal asks, and Will shrugs with a single shoulder.

“Oh, um, Molly is always talking about them, thought I would finally take her out one of these days.” His eyes wander the crowd, “She’s much more sociable at these events than I am.”

“Molly?” Hannibal questions.

“Yes, Molly,” Will answers, “My wife.”

He continues on, idly explaining her love of opera, but Hannibal’s mind has frozen in place. This has never happened before. Never. Not once has Will even had feelings for anyone that wasn’t Hannibal. And yet here he was, already taken. Already swept away before Hannibal even got a chance to see him.

“My ears were burning,” a lady says, sidling up beside Will, and Hannibal wants to strangle her.

“Molly,” Will greets, warmly like a husband should, “I was just talking with Hannibal about the opera.”

“Oh yes!” Molly gushes, “It was a glorious night. And lovely to meet you again Hannibal.”

“You as well,” Hannibal replies. He had seen her before, earlier in the year she had come for a special opening and they had chatted together about the performance. She was tolerable but seemed kind of plain. Now she has become Hannibal’s greatest enemy. “How long have you two been together?”

Will half shrugs, and Molly takes over the conversation for him, “2 years or so, such a short time but he’s really become important to me, and Wally.”

“My stepson,” Will fills in.

“I think he likes you more than me,” Molly jokes, laughing along. Hannibal notices that they haven’t really met each other's eyes yet. “Oh, Hannibal,” Molly says, “you used to host dinner parties didn’t you?”

“Yes, I haven’t for a while though,” he had hosted them to garner Will’s attention but it hadn’t quite worked. Will never seemed to touch his social circle enough for that apparently.

Molly turns to Will, “I heard they were wonderful, I would have loved to come,” she sighs, “Well, maybe next time.”

“I have been thinking of starting them again,” Hannibal lies, “If so, what days would suit you both?”

—

Unfortunately, at the first dinner party, Hannibal is unable to separate Will and Molly for any significant measure of time. Molly sits beside him, and she apparently attracts enough friends to fill around them both. Will doesn't really make conversation, happy to let Molly control the flow of words for him.

Hannibal attempts to engage him, but after his first few attempts are squashed by others' unwanted replies, he stops to avoid being seen as desperate. (Not because he is sulking, certainly not.) When they leave, Molly gushes to him about the food, and thanks Hannibal for inviting them, and Hannibal dutifully kisses her cheeks and shakes Will's hand.

The next dinner is thrown barely a month later, and the one after is only two weeks away.

On their fourth dinner, a much more reserved affair with only a few guests, Hannibal finally gets to have a longer conversation with Will. They eat, and when everyone splits for drinks, he manages to drag them to one of the many sitting rooms, alone. Molly had finally wandered off with the women to talk, and Hannibal had seized the chance.

He lets Will wander around the room for a few minutes, looking at each of the many books on the shelves, before one sparks his attention.

"This book is in Latin," Will says, tapping the spine, "you read it?"

Hannibal takes a peak over his shoulder, "Hmm yes, I have a translated copy as well if you would like?"

"No no, I just find it interesting, you've got it hidden away like a secret," he tips his head to the side, "I thought a man such as yourself would want to show off his skills."

"I am a man of many secrets," Hannibal says lowly. "Well," Will replies softly, meeting his eyes hesitantly, "I shall be excited to learn more of them."

Then he leans forward ever so slightly, and at Hannibal's exhale he brushes their lips together. He's not sure who moves first but suddenly they're crashing into each other, and tumbling onto the sofa. Will grapples with him almost desperately, and Hannibal reaches back with a similar ferocity.

After a minute or two, they break apart, both completely out of breath.

"Well," Hannibal begins, "I must say I was not expecting this so soon."

"Hmm?" Will hums softly, then he lets out a soft breathy laugh, "Oh yes, you were not very subtle."

"I was perfectly subtle," Hannibal counters, "you are just incredibly perceptive."

"I'm already half in your bed, there's no need for further flattery."

Hannibal sighs, "I believe there shall always be a need for flattery," he counters.

“Well, perhaps I shall stay tonight for more,” Will whispers, “without all the distraction outside.”

Hannibal blinks, a little off-kilter, he had expected much more would be needed to separate Molly and Will. After all, they had been together for two years she said, and humans tended to stay monogamous. “Tonight?”

“I’ll feign a headache, I get migraines sometimes, so Molly will be able to cover for me. She’ll be happy to watch over Wally for the night.” He laughs as if he’s told a great joke, “I watched over him just a week ago so there shouldn’t be.”

“She won’t get suspicious?” Hannibal asks, “Or do you wish for a divorce so quickly?”

Will stops, looks at him, and then slowly untangles himself to sit up on the couch. “I’m not going to divorce her,” he says, “she’s my very good friend. I wouldn’t do that to her.”

“But you want to stay tonight,” Hannibal says, “and send her away.”

“Well yes, she has no interest in watching if that’s what you’re implying,” Will shrugs, “and I didn’t think you were hoping for her involvement?”

And suddenly Hannibal’s mind catches up to the conversation, like a rope snapping, “You do not love her.”

“She’s my friend,” Will rebuts, “and we are married.” He looks over at the fire, “but yes, I do not love her in a way a husband should love his wife.”

“Will you ever love her?” Hannibal asks, needing to know.

Will shakes his head as if the admission is a great burden, “We are both…diseased,” Will says softly, “I cannot love her, and she cannot love me. We have an arrangement in place so that we can both satisfy our desires as needed.”

Honestly, Hannibal feels a little hurt at that, as much as he feels relieved, “I would be fulfilling those desires then? A secret lover in the night? Hidden away in shadows so as to not threaten your little faux family?”

“Yes,” Will hisses, staring at him upset, “Do not pretend you wouldn’t be doing the same with me! You’re a member of high society, they get a whiff of even what we’ve done tonight and you’ll be shunned. You’ll be hiding me as much as I do you, if not more.”

“I would not be hiding you,” Hannibal says lowly, “I could never hide something as dear as you.”

“We’ve shared a kiss, nothing more,” Will retorts, and he turns and leaves the room. By the time Hannibal returns, Molly and Will have left, and the guests tell him Will had fallen too ill to stay.

When Wally goes outside to play the next morning, there’s a bouquet of flowers on the doorstep of their apartment, addressed to ‘something dear’. Will throws them in the bin.

—

Will knocks on Hannibal's door at a late hour, just after he had prepared dinner for himself. He makes it a meal for two before he even answers the door.

"Hannibal," Will greets, something hidden behind his eyes.

"Will," Hannibal returns, "please, come in."

Will does, and Hannibal attempts to lead him deeper into the house, but Will stops in the entry room.

"I wanted to talk about the other night." Will starts, "about what happened."

"I figured you hadn't come for a social call," Hannibal agrees, "what did you want to discuss?"

Will swallows, "You wanted to have sex with me," he says, "but not just that."

"Yes," Hannibal nods slightly, "I don't believe in hiding away something so important to me."

"You don't know me enough to know that." Will rebuts quickly, forcefully.

Hannibal holds his hand out, splayed, like he had nothing to hide, "I know you prefer fish over steak, you hide behind your wife in conversation until it interests you, I know you've got a fascination for the macabre, I know you have secrets of your own." He meets Wills's eyes, "I would like to know you more, know you enough to be important to you in turn."

Will looks away first, "You can't think that won't come without consequences."

"I'm not a man who is easily scared," Hannibal says, "I can assure you that no harm will come to you."

"What about my wife," Will hisses, "no man would take care of her, have a marriage like ours. I will not leave her out in the cold after everything she's done for me."

"I have many rooms," Hannibal offers, "many houses. Many acquaintances."

Will stops, and considers, "I haven't thought about being with someone seriously. Not in a long time."

"It's not something we have to rush," Hannibal assures, "Come, share a glass of wine with me again. Let me get to know you without anyone around."

Will nods and takes a step through the large archway into the lounge room of Hannibal's lavish house. "I will allow that," he settles on, "you won't tell anyone until we're ready?"

"I won't tell anyone, even though I want to," Hannibal promises, "you are something I would like to show off one day."

Will flushes as Hannibal offers him the glass of wine, and it's a step in the right direction.

———

For the next few dinners, Hannibal tries to coax Will to sit next to him. When they mingle after meals he tries to get close. Will still flinches away from his touch when others are around, but will lean in ever so slightly when they're alone.

Hannibal has never given much thought to the intricate social structure of human life. He comes down to see Will, and in between he will either leave for his home or stay to lord over those around him. He does curse himself slightly in this regard, he had missed whenever humans had gathered such an odd view of relationships. He had been so used to Will falling into his arms so easily, or simply taking time to warm up to him. But now, Will was open, he was ready, but he didn't dare touch Hannibal around others for fear of repercussion.

It was odd.

He's tempted to magic it all away, bend enough minds to let Will feel comfortable. But he can't bend Will, and he'll remember. Besides, it's interesting, what Will might do now that he wants, but he can't have.

After the dinners though, Will and Hannibal get time to themselves. Will stays while everyone leaves, Molly leaving last of course to keep their illusion. Hannibal had been told that she was happy for them, but it doesn't quell the soft anger in him of daring to take Will first. He had still introduced her to Alana and Margot in hopes that she would be more swayed towards him.

"Would you like to meet my son?" Will asks one night, in the warm darkness

"Would you like me to meet him?" Hannibal returns, "Is that a step you'd like us to take."

Will looks down and away, "only if you were honest about letting us stay one day."

"I was," Hannibal assures, "If you ever want to bring your family here I will gladly house you all. I have many properties, it wouldn't be suspicious."

Will nods, sharply, violently, "Well, do you mind if we invite you over for dinner?"

"You'd like to have me over?" Hannibal asks, "Not come to one of my parties?"

"I think it's about time we pay you back," Will says, a small smile playing along his features, "I can cook, you know."

"You would cook for me?" Hannibal asks, and Will nods a little self-consciously.

He scratches the back of his neck, "I fish, down near the house. It's just a hobby but it means I got pretty good at seafood. Molly won't touch dead things with a ten-foot pole."

"You seem comfortable with them though?" Hannibal asks.

“There’s no point in being squeamish.” Will shrugs and then finally looks Hannibal in the eyes, “I’m not expected home for another few hours.”

“Well,” Hannibal considers, smiling like a shark, “I don’t believe I’ve shown you the new drapes I have in my room.”

Will eagerly follows him up the stairs.

—

They do end up having dinner together, and Hannibal visits Will’s tiny house for the first time. It’s not particularly minuscule, but nowhere the grandeur of his own. Everything is much more compact, and there’s an air of chaos. Will takes the pan out of the oven with one hand and bats away Wally’s wandering with his other. Molly sets the table while Will tries to set dishes down, and Wally sits in his seat impatiently swinging his legs.

The meal is delicious, admittedly, and Hannibal savours every bite. It’s nothing special, but it’s homely. The flavours were familiar and warm, to fit with everything else in their house.

They discuss idly about various topics, the opera, dinner, and plans for holidays. And after the meal, Hannibal and Wally retire to the living room and Hannibal is shown every picture Wally can remember being in. The child could talk for years if they let him.

In the kitchen, Hannibal can hear the soft whispers of Will and Molly, too soft for a human to hear. Not soft enough for him.

“If this is what you want,” Molly starts and Will cuts her off.

“It’s about what we want.”

“That would be a perfect world,” Molly says, and Hannibal can hear the wry smile in her voice. “If you’ve found someone, truly found someone, I won’t stop you. I mean, he’s already offered to house us all.”

He can hear the clinking of plates as Will stacks them, “I’ve built a life with you,” he says softly, “while I would love to build one with him, I will not go back on our vows.”

“We knew we were faking when we made them,” Molly replies idly, splashing around in dishwater, “in another life we wouldn’t have had to make them in the first place. You would’ve made them with him.”

“Perhaps,” Will allows.

“Hannibal is good for you, better than I ever could be.” He can hear her tap Will on the shoulder, or perhaps his chest, “besides, you don’t have to worry about me. Hannibal wasn’t lying when he said he had other … exotic friends. I have been on a few trips myself.”

“You're happy to move in,” Will asks, nervous now, “truly happy?”

“Truly happy,” Molly assures, “not just happy for you. Besides you’ve seen his kitchen I would love to bake in that thing.”

Will laughs, and Hannibal lets himself disconnect from their moment. His opinion of Molly has softened, not completely, but somewhat. She did make Will happy, and she was good to him, as much as she could be without being Hannibal. And most of all they weren’t in love.

And so, a few weeks later, Will and Molly are moving into Hannibal’s property. Well, they officially start moving in a few weeks later, after their house mysteriously burnt down. It was a miracle most of their belongings were already in Hannibal’s house, and completely undamaged by the fire.

Will, Molly, and Wally officially live in one of Hannibal’s smaller cottage houses, usually reserved for gardeners, but more often than not Will stays over in Hannibal’s room. They carry on in secret, though an open one to everyone in their social circle. Hannibal wishes to marry Will in this lifetime, as he had done in so many others, but it’s not possible.

They grow old together, as much as Hannibal can grow old, and when Will dies, Hannibal leaves the estate to Molly and Wally before disappearing. Their history ultimately ends with Wally’s death only a few decades later, and the massive estate remains devoid of life for many more years.

Hannibal only mourns that anyone who entered wouldn’t even know how much they loved each other.

Chapter End Notes

This one was way way longer than intended. And then a little rushed, sorry about that. Either way, I hope it wasn't too dark, hopefully just a little different more than anything. Well, as always, thank you for all of the comments, kudos, bookmarks, and hits. I hope you enjoyed, and have a lovely rest of your day!

The Specialist and the Other Specialist

Chapter Summary

> Will is hot on the heels of an evasive murderer. Except, not really, the killer is literally right there but Will is kind of okay with that.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal finds Will at a crime scene, interestingly enough. He had gotten amazingly bored in the in-between and decided to have a little fun with human lives. He's watching the police scramble around his delicate scene when he spots the telltale curly brown hair and flash of blue eyes. He's got them seared into his memory by now.

It's a surprise, honestly, Will was always hiding a darkness to match his own, but never to such an extent that he would join the police force, but he also never seemed to enjoy that kind of work.

A policeman standing around notices Hannibal staring at Will, and slides up next to him.

"That's our expert," he boasts, "best detective in all of London."

"Oh," Hannibal asks, feigning surprise, "the best?"

"He's got some highly confidential skills," the man reports, "Of course, I can't go telling you, but he makes these amazing leaps in knowledge, and no one knows how. But, he's right you know." Hannibal ignores the fact that the man has in fact, just told him what is most likely 'highly confidential', and rakes his eyes over the scene again. It really was a masterful work of art before the men swarmed the scene. He had even laid out flowers and herbs to highlight the torn flesh. And perhaps as a slight joke about his own eating habits.

He watches as Will takes a step away from the scene and back towards one of the men around the edges. He can hear a hushed conversation, demands to know more from both sides.

"He lives around here," he hears Will say, and he's not at all surprised that he's correct.

—

The police knock on his door, of course they do, he's barely two doors down. He sweeps the evidence away with a flick of his hand. Even though they have no way of checking, his knives are now sparkling clean, his floors without a speck, and no blood residue will be found anywhere in his house or on his person.

He does like the chase, but he doesn't like to get caught.

"Please, come in," Hannibal offers when he spots the two officers on his doorstep. They file in, and then behind them comes Will. He looks scruffy, uncared for. Hannibal notices the dark circles under his eyes as they scan his walls and floor, not even a shred of attention paid to him. Well, Hannibal knows that attention is being paid, he knows that by looking at everything but Hannibal, he's building a case in his mind.

"Thank you, Dr Lecter," one of the men says, slightly older, "I'm Detective Price, this is Detective Zeller, and we're here about the murder of Mrs Downberry, have you heard about that?"

"Yes, I have," Hannibal says, "a terrible affair. I saw as I walked past two days ago, it looked…horrific."

"It certainly was," Detective Zeller says, "we're just doing the rounds in the neighbourhood, you know, checking off all our boxes. You understand?"

"Of course," Hannibal says, "here, I have a sitting room if you'd like."

"Oh, that would be great," Detective Price says, obviously tired of being on his feet. Will doesn't even blink at the outburst, too focused on a particular book on his shelf, but he does follow into the sitting room. He refuses to sit though.

"Can you walk us through your evening on the 19th? Anything you did, anything abnormal that happened?"

"Of course," Hannibal explains, "I had finished my clinic for the day, and was sitting down for dinner, probably around 7:30 is when I ate but I was cooking for at least 45 minutes before that. Then, I retired to my office for some clinical notes, and finally went to bed around 9 p.m. I did not fall asleep until later though, I did some light reading."

"Did you hear anything out of the ordinary? See anything outside?" Detective Price asks.

Hannibal shakes his head mournfully, "I may have heard a dog, or some light argument, nothing I would have noted as suspicious. It can get quite noisy with the bar down the road."

"What did you have for dinner?" Will asks, inspecting one of Hannibal's statues in the corner of the room. He doesn't turn to face them.

"Dinner?" Hannibal asks, "I had pork."

"45 minutes for pork?" Will asks, "for one?"

"I don't cook simply," Hannibal answers, "My apologies, I didn't catch your name?"

"It wasn't offered," Will challenges.

"Excuse him," Detective Zeller tries to smooth, "this is our Special Consultant, Mr Graham."

“Pleasure to meet you,” Hannibal offers, and Will finally turns to look at him then, glancing at his eyes before his gaze dances away.

“You had a quiet evening in then?” Will asks, and Hannibal nods.

“I am often tired after my work.”

“Can anyone confirm that?” Will prods.

Hannibal hums idly, “I wouldn’t think so, aside from my secretary who can attest to when I left. I would offer to show you my notes from that evening but that would cross the confidentiality of my patients.”

“Yes, it would,” Detective Zeller agrees, in almost a hiss, “C’mon Will.”

“But you would with a warrant?” Will asks, challenging even though he’s been asked to heel. Hannibal admires his fire.

“I would,” Hannibal replies, “if you think I am a suspect.”

Will shrugs with one shoulder, “just covering our bases.”

“I understand,” Hannibal offers, “I noticed that the wounds looked clinical, and I understand that as a surgeon I would be under suspicion.”

“You noticed the wounds?” Detective Zeller asks.

Hannibal nods, “of course, I am a very skilled doctor. I noticed the cuts were made with a scalpel. But whoever has done this is obviously not taking their vows to healing seriously.”

“You noticed that from so far away?” Detective Zeller repeats, incredulous and impressed all in one, “it took us a day to figure that out.”

“I’m very experienced,” Hannibal offers as explanation, “I would be happy to assist in the case if needed.”

The detectives are suitably impressed by his weaving tales, though Will looks incredibly suspicious. Nonetheless, they all leave easily and with no further questions, and three days later Hannibal is formally invited to join the case.

—

Hannibal walks into the police office with the signed invite, and the room is abuzz with activity. There are officers running to and fro, photos of his multiple crimes scattered across boards and desks, and phones ringing all around him.

He walks up to the man in charge, a large man in front of the main desk.

“You’re the surgeon expert?” The man asks.

“Yes, Dr. Hannibal Lecter,” he replies, “you are..Mr Jack Crawford?”

“Yeah,” Jack nods, already distracted by someone running past, “I’m gonna set you up in the specialist corner, over there. Feel free to grab a set of pictures.” Jack points to the wall, and Hannibal assumes it’s behind that. He nods, and continues on as Jack begins speaking with another detective.

He rounds the corner and spots Will, hunched over a small desk and hastily scribbling notes all over a pad of paper. In front of him are the varied pictures of the crime scene, though unlike the others all over the detective's desks, there are no notes on them.

“Hello,” Hannibal greets, “Will, was it?”

Will startles, and grips his head for a second, disguising the movement by fiddling with his glasses. “Don’t sneak up on me,” he says, before finally removing his hand from his face, “please.”

“My apologies,” Hannibal offers, “I was just hoping I had ended up in the right place.”

Will looks at him and then a frown mars his face. “The interrogation rooms are over there.”

“I’m here to be a surgeon consultant,” Hannibal offers, “for the case.”

Will looks at him, well, glares at him, but he sighs and gestures out to an overflowing case next to him. “This is our copy of the case, you can photocopy anything you want. The photocopier is over there.”

“Thank you,” Hannibal says, gently, and he takes the lid off the box in their little corner. He pulls out a few of the photos of crime scenes and looks through them. “Anything I can help with?”

“Not really,” Will mutters, going back to his notepad. He pauses, “you said this one was a scalpel wound?” He points to a line across his most recent victim.

“Hmm,” Hannibal considers, leaning down as if to look closer. Really he’s just catching a whiff of Will’s cologne. “Yes I believe so, and here is more of a knife, still sharp but nowhere near as precise.”

“Hmm,” Will jots down a note. “You said before the wounds looked clinical?”

“Yes,” Hannibal says, very happy that Will is indulging him in conversation, “this one here especially with the scalpel, it seems the most intentional of all.”

Will nods, but doesn’t seem to be paying all that much attention to the conversation, eyes staring at the wounds with an intensity that could light the paper on fire. He breaks out of it abruptly and scribbles a few more notes.

“Are there many other surgeons on your street?” Will asks, seeming to accept that Hannibal is not a suspect for the police. And won’t be anytime soon.

“Yes,” Hannibal offers, pulling a large map out of the box and unravelling it, “here’s the hospital, see? So this street is mostly doctors and nurses.”

“Not nurses,” Will murmurs.

“Not a nurse? A nurse could easily be skilled enough given time,” Hannibal asks, delighted to watch Will’s mind spin.

“No,” Will repeats, “not a nurse. They’re too… high-powered to be content as a nurse. He needs power over the victims and the people around him.”

“You can get all of that from a photograph?” Hannibal asks.

Will shakes, just slightly, a tremor that starts in the back of his neck. “Yes,” he settles on, “we’re both here for our expertise.”

“Indeed,” Hannibal replies softly, intimately, “well, I shall get a copy of everything I need, and I hope we shall get to know each other better.”

Will hums, attention already caught up in another photo, and Hannibal leaves him be for the moment. Will does not do well being trapped in a small space with anyone, so he attempts to give him ample room. He does stay though, and they work together back to back sometimes in the small corner. He even offers Will his home as a quiet space for him to finally do his work without constant noise and blinding downward lights.
Will accepts, and their late nights in the office gradually turn to late nights in Hannibal’s living room, around his dining table, and in his office. He learns that Will has a dog, who misses him dearly if they are apart too long. He learns that Will feels pressure to solve this case as quickly as possible, that his brain feels like it's pulling apart with every dive into the killer's mind.

And, he learns, that Will feels himself becoming more and more impressed with each passing scene. No longer a disgusted detective forced to work, but a more appreciative spectator to Hannibal’s art. Hannibal coaches this instinct, nurtures it like a budding flower or flightless chick, and slowly encourages it to grow.

He leans into it even, his next few scenes are less gruesome, and more artful. Of course there is blood, guts, and pieces spread across a field, but there are also flowers, herbs, and cloth draped artfully across. Will describes it as art in front of Jack even, though not in front of the other detectives.

Slowly, slowly, he opens up to the idea that death can be something exciting, something artful, something that he can’t look down on. Will shows Hannibal how he fishes, and they both delight in gutting their catch and cooking together. Hannibal presents the dish surrounded by flowers and Will’s eyes are dark and hungry. He lets the darkness consume him as it had consumed Hannibal so long ago.

It’s in the 12th scene that Will meets Hannibal’s eyes across the room and he *knows*.

—

They’re having dinner after a long day of work, Will has discovered that Hannibal was definitely not lying about making cooking an art.

“So,” Will starts, stabbing a piece of meat with his fork, “are we going to talk about it?”

“Hm?” Hannibal asks, daring Will to voice his thoughts aloud.

“That you like me.”

Hannibal blinks, this is honestly not the question that he had anticipated coming out in this conversation. “Of course I enjoy spending time with you,” he manages, “you are my dear friend, of course I like you, you are eating in my house.”

“Yes,” Will says, a little exasperated, “I mean, that you would like to ask me out.”

“Well,” Hannibal considers, “I would greatly enjoy getting to know you better, if you would be happy to let me. What made you think of it?”

Will half shrugs, “it’s a little obvious, you keep trying to get closer to me, you’ve invited me over. You’re a show off naturally so that did cloud my view, but you’re more so with me. With your art.”

“I do admit, I thought you were going to ask a different question,” Hannibal says, taking a sip of his wine.

“About the murders?” Will asks, “We’re well past that.”

“We are?” Hannibal asks, “I had expected more pushback than that.”

“I knew when I first walked in your house,” Will says, something dark hiding behind his eyes, “and then I let myself get caught up in you, and now I know again.” He looks over to one of Hannibal’s bookshelves, “I thought that was well established by now.”

“I was aware you knew,” Hannibal admits, “I was not aware you were so comfortable with the idea.”

“I wasn’t,” Will says, matter of fact, “but, I have been slipping into your mind since day one, it’s almost guaranteed I would be able to see your side. And I do. You’ve invited me in for dinner, you've given me a safe space, and our conversations have been … enlightening.” He looks back at him, “You’re not very subtle with that either.”

“You appear to think I am incapable of subtlety,” Hannibal replies, a little insulted.

Will laughs, light and airy, “You made a joke about cannibalism the first time I walked into your house,” he says, “‘Pork for dinner’ you said. I didn’t quite catch it at first but I knew something was up.”

“Well,” Hannibal says, “I do like the chase,” he defends.

“You like to show off,” Will rebuts. “Now, are you going to ask me out?”
Hannibal looks at him, and then smiles, sharp and shark-like. “Will, would you honour me with a date?”

“I think I would.”

The next bodies the police find are two entwined in a lover's embrace, and Will and Hannibal sit in their specialist corner scribbling nonsense notes until the day is up.

For dinner they have pork.

Chapter End Notes

Begin it or not this began as a Sherlock inspired chapter (suggested by Meowth09, thank you so much for the fun scenario!), and ended with...this. I am apparently incapable of staying on task for more than 200 words before it all unravels. Either way, I hope you enjoyed and thank you so much for reading. Thank you for all the comments, I am getting around to replying to everyone, as well as Kudos, bookmarks, even just a read is lovely. I do enjoy watching the numbers climb. Anyway, as always, have a lovely rest of your day!

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